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 ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	CAC-00	VCE-00	AC-01
	NSAE-00	OCS-03	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	ASDS-01	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
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 FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8241
 INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 AMEMBASSY LIMA
 NSC WASHDC
 USCINCSO MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 003341

NSC FOR LLORENS
 USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/25/2012
 TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, ASEC, CASC, VE
 SUBJECT: PLAZA FRANCIA PROTEST -- OCTOBER 25

CLASSIFIED BY: CDA FREDERICK B. COOK FOR REASON 1.5 (D)

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 SUMMARY

1. (U) ARMY COMMANDERS IN CARACAS AND ZULIA STATE AND THE CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ON OCTOBER 25 REJECTED THE OCTOBER 22 CALL FOR DISOBEDIENCE BY FELLOW OFFICERS, UNDERLINING THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO THE VENEZUELAN CONSTITUTION. LATER ON OCTOBER 25, PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ CALLED THE ON-GOING PROTEST IN CARACAS'S PLAZA FRANCIA, NOW PAST THE 72-HOUR MARK, A SCREEN BEHIND WHICH "NEW COUP ATTEMPT IS BEING COOKED UP." CHAVEZ WARNED THAT THE GOV WOULD RESPOND WITH ARMS IF THE OFFICERS ATTEMPTED ANOTHER COUP. ANTI-CHAVEZ DEMONSTRATORS GATHERED TO LISTEN TO SPEAKERS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: ALAN H FLANIGAN
 CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED
 DATE/CASE ID: 08 MAR 2007 200503244

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THROUGHOUT THE DAY, MOST NOTABLY METROPOLITAN CARACAS MAYOR PENA, WHO HELD A CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON STAGE AT THE PLAZA. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME OPPOSITION DEMONSTRATIONS IN MARACAIBO AND VALENCIA, USUALLY PERSONS GATHERING AT DESIGNATED PUBLIC PLACES DURING THE EVENING. END SUMMARY.

MILITARY REJECTS DISOBEDIENCE

2. (U) GEN. JORGE GARCIA CARNEIRO, COMMANDER OF THE CARACAS GARRISON AND GEN ALBERTO GUTIERREZ, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY GARRISON IN ZULIA STATE, PUBLICLY REJECTED THE OCTOBER 22 CALL FOR DISOBEDIENCE ISSUED BY GEN. ENRIQUE MEDINA GOMEZ AND 13 OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS. GEN. GARCIA COMMENTED THAT MEDINA'S STATEMENT DID NOT EXPRESS THE TRUE SENTIMENT IN THE MILITARY. HE ISSUED A CALL FOR "DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING"

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AND REPUDIATED THE "INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE. GEN. GUTIERREZ DESCRIBED THE STATUS OF THE ARMED FORCES IN ZULIA AS "COMPLETELY NORMAL." HE SAID MEDINA AND THE OTHER OFFICERS WERE ACTING OUTSIDE THE CONSTITUTION AND LACKED THE LEADERSHIP TO INFLUENCE THE MILITARY. BOTH GARCIA AND GUTIERREZ EXPLICITLY SUPPORTED THE CONSTITUTION AND THE GOVERNMENT. SOME 20 OFFICERS APPEARED WITH GARCIA WHEN HE READ HIS STATEMENT TO REPORTERS.

3. (U) ONLY ONE VENEZUELAN AIR FORCE GENERAL, OTHER THAN THE TWO AMONG THE ORIGINAL 14, HAS JOINED THE DEMONSTRATION. HE HAS BEEN "EN CASA" SINCE MID-20020500. GEN. VASQUEZ VELASCO, FORMER VENEZUELAN ARMY COMMANDER AND ONE OF THE FOUR PRIME MOVERS OF THE APRIL EXONERATED BY THE SUPREME TRIBUNAL IN AUGUST, HAS STATED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE ACTION BUT NOTED HE'LL NOT GO TO PLAZA FRANCIA.

4. (U) NATIONAL GUARD (VENG) COMMANDER, GEN. EUGENIO GUTIERREZ CRITICIZED THE GUARD OFFICERS WHO HAD JOINED THE PLAZA FRANCIA PROTEST, DISAVOWING THEIR STATEMENTS AS "INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE" AND CRITICIZING THEM FOR VIOLATING THE PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLINE, OBEDIENCE AND SUBORDINATION. SOME TWO-DOZEN GUARD OFFICERS WENT TO PLAZA FRANCIA OCTOBER 24. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE GUARD UPHOLDS INSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY. SEVEN ACTIVE DUTY NATIONAL GUARD GENERALS, NOT AMONG THE INITIAL 14 OFFICERS, HAVE COME OUT TO SUPPORT THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE DEMONSTRATIONS. FOUR OF THOSE SEVEN HAVE BEEN "EN CASA" DUE TO THEIR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN THE APRIL EVENTS. THREE HOLD VENG HEADQUARTERS' STAFF JOBS, BUT NOT IN DIRECT CONTROL OF VENG

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CHAVEZ THREATENS

5. (U) PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ OCTOBER 25 CALLED THE PLAZA FRANCIA PROTEST A SCREEN BEHIND WHICH "NEW COUP ATTEMPT IS BEING COOKED UP." SPEAKING TO AN INVITED AUDIENCE AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, CHAVEZ WARNED THAT THE GOV WOULD RESPOND WITH ARMS IF THE DISSIDENT OFFICERS ATTEMPTED ANOTHER COUP. THE PRESIDENT CALLED ON VENEZUELANS TO BE ON ALERT IN CASE THEY NEED TO DEFEND VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY AND THE CONSTITUTION. HE SAID HE AND OTHERS, INCLUDING THE VICE PRESIDENT, MINISTERS AND DEPUTIES, HAD SOUGHT TO CONVINCE THE OPPOSITION TO CORRECT THE SITUATION. SHOULD THAT NOT OCCUR, CHAVEZ NOTED, THE STATE IS "OBLIGED TO ACT."

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

6. (U) METROPOLITAN CARACAS MAYOR ALFREDO PENA ADDRESSED THE PLAZA FRANCIA PROTESTORS THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 25. NINE OF THIRTEEN CARACAS COUNCIL MEMBERS ACCOMPANIED THE MAYOR ON STAGE. PENA REJECTED THE POSSIBLE GOV RETALIATING AGAINST

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THE DISSENTING OFFICERS, SAYING THEY WERE ACTING WITHIN THEIR
CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS. HE URGED FELLOW MAYORS AROUND THE
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COUNTRY TO STATE THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE PLAZA FRANCIA PROTEST
REJECTING A VIOLENT SOLUTION TO THE POLITICAL IMPASSE -- "NO
COUP OR SELF COUP."

PROTESTS IN THE PROVINCES

7. (SBU) THE COMMANDER OF THE LIBERTADOR GARRISON IN
MARACAIBO ISSUED A STATEMENT REQUESTING THAT PEOPLE NOT
PROTEST IN FRONT OF THE GARRISON. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] IT IS THE OLDEST MILITARY INSTALLATION IN MARACAIBO,
QUITE SMALL, AND THAT EITHER OCTOBER 23 OR 24, A PERSON ON
THE OUTSIDE TRIED TO INCITE THE SOLDIERS. CONTRARY TO OTHER
REPORTS [REDACTED] NOT THAT MANY PEOPLE WERE
PROTESTING OUTSIDE THE MILITARY INSTALLATION. HE NOTED THAT
SINCE OCTOBER 22, LARGE CROWDS HAVE GATHERED AT PLAZA
REPUBLICA IN MARACAIBO, AT ABOUT 4 P.M. UNTIL MIDNIGHT OR SO
- NOT 24 HOURS A DAY. THE GATHERINGS HAVE ALL BEEN PEACEFUL.

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ON A MARACAIBO TV SHOW TODAY, APUNTO, COMMENTATOR JUAN
CARLOS FERNANDEZ PLEADED WITH THOSE WHO ARE PRO-GOVERNMENT TO
DEMONSTRATE WELL AWAY FROM PLAZA REPUBLICA TO AVOID ANY
CONFRONTATION.

7. (C) SUPPORTERS OF THE PLAZA FRANCIA PROTEST ARE ALSO
TURNING OUT IN VALENCIA. POLOFF, ATTENDING A CONFERENCE OF
LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES THERE, LEARNED THAT
RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN GATHERING EACH RECENT EVENING AT THE
CITY'S REDOMO GUAPARO, USUALLY BETWEEN 4:00 P.M. AND 10:00
P.M. THE GATHERINGS HAVE BEEN PEACEFUL, WITH PRO-CHAVEZ
GATHERING AT A PUBLIC POINT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CITY.

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